



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

November 23, 2005

ICE ARRESTS 15 GUYANESE ATTEMPTING TO ILLEGALLY ENTER THE UNITED STATES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Fifteen illegal immigrants from Guyana who claimed to be Canadian citizens were apprehended by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents yesterday as they attempted to enter the United States through the small island of Culebra off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico.

The Guyanese were spotted by police officers of the Puerto Rico Police Department near Zoni Beach following their landing on the small island.

The group presented fraudulent United States and Canadian passports to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors.

A preliminary ICE investigation revealed the Guyanese were transported to Puerto Rico by yawl—a homemade, fragile vessel commonly used for human smuggling in the Caribbean Basin—from the nearby Caribbean island of St. Maarten.

“Smugglers who think the eastern coast of Puerto Rico is an easy target to introduce illegal immigrants into the United States should think again,” said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of ICE in Puerto Rico. “ICE and our Department of Homeland Security partners in Puerto Rico are committed to restoring integrity to our nation’s immigration system by halting the illegal entry of immigrants.”

The Guyanese were processed for expedited removal by CBP and turned over to ICE detention and removal officers for their removal from the United States.

Disrupting and dismantling human smuggling and trafficking rings has been a top priority for ICE since the agency was established in March 2003, given the potential threat that these organizations pose both to national security and public safety. With ICE’s broad authorities for enforcing immigration and customs laws and its expertise in financial investigations, the agency is able to pursue human smuggling organizations more aggressively than ever before. As a result, ICE agents arrested more than 1,630 human smugglers nationwide in fiscal year 2004.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.